

Center of Science Industry (COSI)
COSI's Inquiry Learning for Schools (ILS) Program

Goal: improving teacher quality

Purpose: COSI's Inquiry Learning for Schools program is designed to ensure the continued growth of science and math literacy across the state of Ohio. It is aimed at under-funded and under-served districts in selected urban and rural parts of the state. The initiative provides a comprehensive set of services for professional development, enhanced learning opportunities for students, and shared science experiences for families, teachers and students. The program incorporates inquiry-based learning methodology and reflects national science education standards.

Brief summary and accomplishments: Over 1400 teachers currently participate in one of two different professional development program levels. The level one program is open to teachers in grades 4 – 8 that apply and are accepted as a COSI Fellow. These teachers are immersed in inquiry-based methods with a 112-hour program that meets throughout the school year. A robust evaluation program has been designed to assess effectiveness and learning. The level two program is open to any K-8 teacher in participating districts. These teachers, called Inquirers, are invited to special workshops and receive written information, including a newsletter that introduces various inquiry-based education experiences.

Teachers in both program levels practice what they have learned regarding inquiry-based teaching methods as they prepare their students to participate in either a COSI learning expedition/field trip or an outreach experience. Over 23,000 students will visit COSI this year for a COSI Learning Expedition field trip. In addition, over 13,000 participants will attend COSI's thirteen free family nights available to each participating school.

Plans for next 12 months: The program will be expanded. New districts will be invited to join the program, increasing the number of teachers, students and families impacted. In addition, evaluation efforts will be increased. A research group will be hired to facilitate the collection and compilation of select data. Research will include an assessment of the effect of inquiry-based methods on students' understanding of science concepts found on the Ohio Proficiency test and in the state and national standards.